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ABSTRACT

An effective director of adult basic education (ABE) utilizes the strengths of his staff. Improvement of ABE programs should include careful attention to priorities and local needs. Community cosponsorship agreements are mutually beneficial and an effective means of student recruitment. Scheduling should allow for balance in time, location, instructional methods, and content. Recently many more choices in instructional materials and equipment for ABE programs have become available so evaluation should be based on sound procedures. Special talents and outlooks are required for ABE teachers, who may benefit from preservice and inservice programs. Paraprofessionals may also be used. ABE programs must be sold to prospective students, so directors must know and practice effective sales techniques. An inviting climate for learning can ease the transition and hold students. Programed instruction and other forms of individualized instruction are particularly helpful. Guidance must be provided and accurate records and budgets kept. Annual evaluation is helpful. (MS)

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Building a Successful
Adult Basic Education Program

The Director's Role

STATE OF OHIO
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Martin W. Essex
Superintendent of Public Instruction

1973

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Building a Successful Adult Basic Education Program

By Robert E. Finch
Formerly Director of Adult Education, Cincinnati City Schools
Currently President, Individualized Programmed Instruction Laboratories, Inc.

Chapter		Page
1	Establishing Management Priorities	1
2	Identifying Local Needs	4
3	Developing Community Partnerships	8
4	Planning a Balanced Program	13
5	Selecting Instructional Materials and Equipment	17
6	Employing Talented Teachers	20
7	Training Teachers—Preservice	24
8	Training Teachers—Inservice	28
9	Recruiting and Training Paraprofessionals	34
10	Selling ABE to Prospective Students	37
11	Creating a Climate for Learning	45
12	Providing Individualized Instruction	49
13	Providing Guidance and Counseling	54
14	Keeping Records and Preparing Budgets	58
15	Evaluating the Program	61
16	Looking Back and Ahead	64

State of Ohio • Department of Education • Martin W. Essex, *Superintendent of Public Instruction* • Robert Bowers, *Assistant Superintendent, Instruction* • R. A. Horn, *Director, Division of Federal Assistance* • James W. Miller, *Chief, Special Programs Section* • Eileen Young, *Editor* • 1973

Building a Successful Adult Basic Education Program
The Director's Role

1. Establishing Management Priorities

Full-time directors of Adult Basic Education have a wide variety of tasks from which to choose if they wish to develop a successful ABE program. Therefore, the establishment of management priorities in relation to administrative time and available funds is an essential part of their role as effective administrators.

The part-time director in a small school district may have to concentrate on just a few of the many priorities considered essential for a good program. He or she must determine, within time limitations, the most important areas to emphasize to serve undereducated adults in the community.

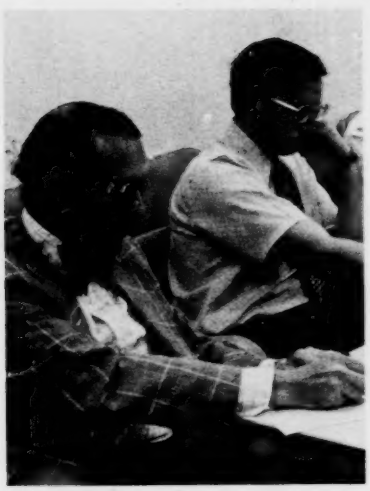
Leadership Ability

Closely allied to the establishment of program priorities is the leadership ability of the director. Does the director personally select instructional materials and equipment or does he delegate this responsibility to the staff? Does the director use the capabilities and interests of teachers in planning and conducting an inservice training program or does he feel that he must personally "give the message"? *An effective director utilizes the strengths of his staff.*

Priority Considerations

Each program should have short-range plans built on long-term goals. Most superintendents and boards of education give greater financial consideration and support to well developed, short-range plans when they relate directly to long-term goals.

The annual report to the superintendent and board of education can help a director gain increased commitment for ABE programming and input into local policy. Such a report can also help a director weigh priority needs. The most effective reports are concise and include human interest stories as well as enrollment statistics and financial data. Include both current plans and future goals. Describe



progress for the present year and make recommendations for the coming year. Recognize unmet administrative responsibilities due to limited administrative time or inadequate funds. List program priorities in order of importance. Support these priorities with brief, but adequate, supportive evidence.

Responsibilities which a director may decide should be handled in specific priority order include the following:

- ► Identify or reassess the need for ABE in the community.
- ► Organize better methods of working with teachers, laboratory coordinators, counselors, paraprofessionals, clerical staff, and adult participants in program improvement.
- ► Design an effective recruitment program, or evaluate and improve the ongoing recruitment program.
- ► Develop closer partnerships with other community organizations.
- ► Plan a more balanced instructional program in relation to administrative planning, time of day classes are offered, location of classes, instructional methods, and instructional content.
- ► Extend the ABE program to include special instruction for non-English-speaking adults.
- ► Improve procedures used for selecting instructional materials and equipment.

- ► Develop a more effective method of teacher selection.
- ► Plan and operate a year-round local program of preservice and inservice training for teachers.
- ► Develop and conduct a preservice and inservice training program for paraprofessionals and volunteers.
- ► Improve the climate for adult learning.
- ► Open a new ABE learning laboratory or improve an existing one.
- ► Develop more effective counseling services.
- ► Consider ways in which financial management of the program can be improved.
- ► Develop an ongoing evaluation plan for the entire program—staffing, student recruitment, student placement, facilities, instructional services, instructional materials, counseling, preservice and inservice training, community partnerships.

Implications

In large and small communities, improvement of the ABE program should be a step-by-step process with careful attention given to priorities. Generally, it is not physically or financially possible—or perhaps desirable—to attempt improvement in all areas of responsibility at the same time. Without strong leadership or without short-range plans and long-term goals, the ABE program will operate on a piecemeal basis from day to day and year to year.

2. Identifying Local Needs

One of the early, but extremely important, tasks of an ABE director is to identify local needs.

1970 Statistical Data

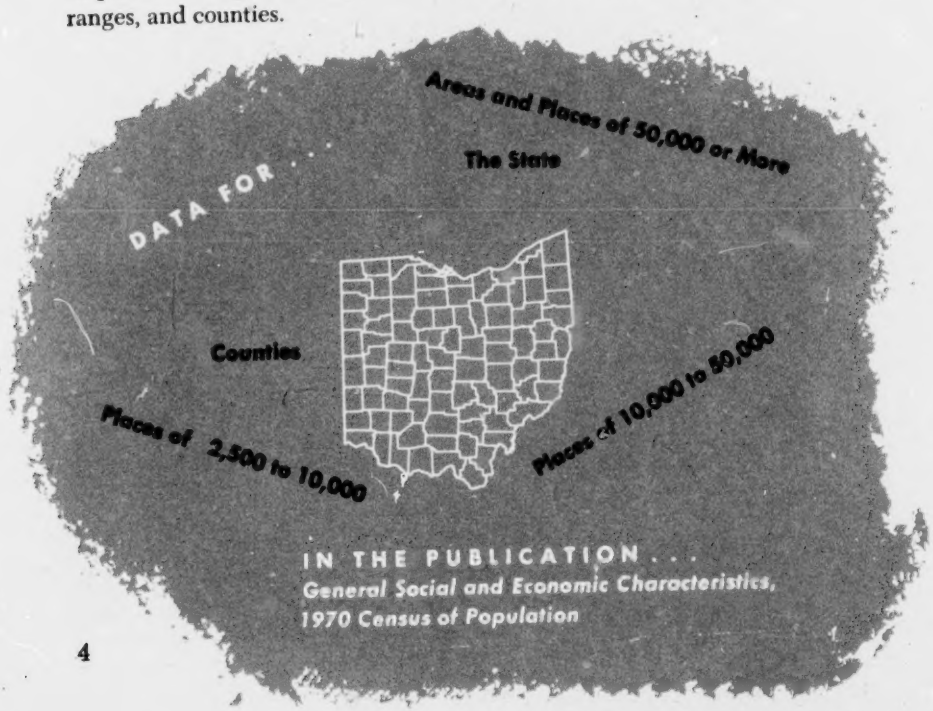
A publication entitled *General Social and Economic Characteristics, 1970 Census of Population,* published for each state by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, contains statistical data particularly relevant to ABE program considerations. The report is available in most public library reference rooms or it may be purchased for $4.25 from one of the following:

Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office in Washington, D.C.

U.S. Department of Commerce Business Services Field Offices in Cincinnati or Cleveland.

U.S. Government Printing Bookstores in Canton or Cleveland.

This publication provides an ABE director with one of the best resources of information about the social and economic characteristics of persons living in metropolitan areas, places in specified population ranges, and counties.


DATA FOR . . .
The State
Areas and Places of 50,000 or More
Counties
Places of 2,500 to 10,000
Places of 10,000 to 50,000
IN THE PUBLICATION . . .
General Social and Economic Characteristics,
1970 Census of Population

The following outline suggests entries of particular interest and value to ABE directors. It is based on tables for places of 10,000 to 50,000. Other tables provide similar separate data for the Negro population and persons of Spanish language. Tables for areas and places of 50,000 or more are more detailed and organized in a somewhat different manner. Tables for places of 2,500 to 10,000 are less detailed. The county-by-county section includes tables with separate data for rural nonfarm and rural farm populations.

Social Characteristics

Mother tongue

Educational and Family Characteristics

Years of school completed; male and female, 25 years old and over

Employment Characteristics

Employment status; male, 16 to 21 years; not enrolled in school; not high school graduate; unemployed or not in labor force

Labor mobility; male, 30 to 49 years old in 1970; non-worker vs worker in 1965 and 1970

Occupation and Earnings

Occupations of employed persons

Median earnings of employed persons for selected occupation groups

Industry of Employed Persons and Occupation of Experienced Unemployed Persons

Last occupation of experienced unemployed; male and female, 16 years old and over

Income and Poverty Status in 1969

Income less than poverty level

Income less than 75 percent of poverty level

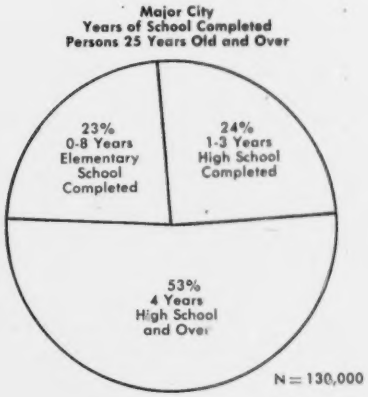
Income less than 125 percent of poverty level

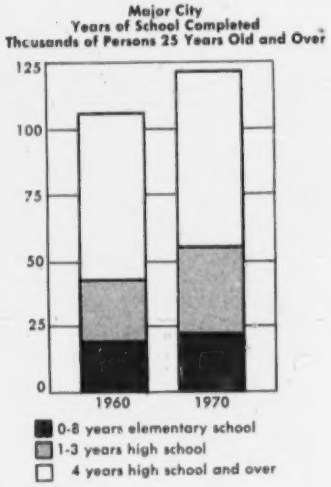
Comparison of 1960 and 1970 Statistical Data

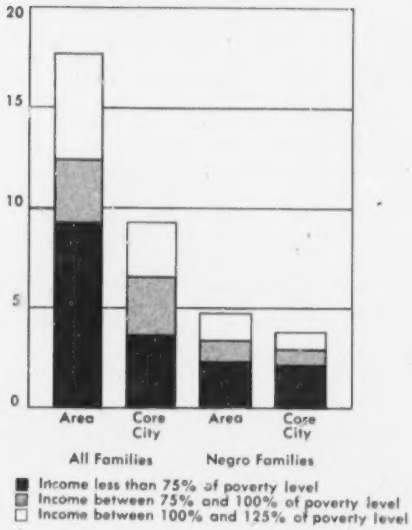
Comparative data for 1960 and 1970 can be quite helpful. The *General Social and Economic Characteristics, 1960 Census of Population* is still available for reference at U.S. Department of Commerce field offices or in some public libraries. If not, available statistics from other agencies such as the Bureau of Employment Services or the county welfare department can be used.

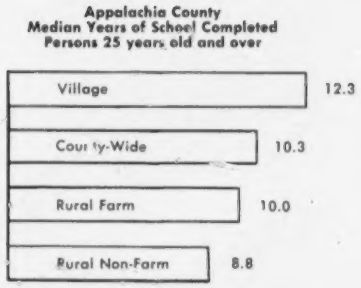
In most communities the median school years completed in 1970 has increased over 1960. The percentage of increase or decrease of adults, 25 years old and over, completing grades 1-8 in a given community may be significant for ABE planning. For example, has the percentage of adults with "no school years completed" increased or decreased in the community since 1960?

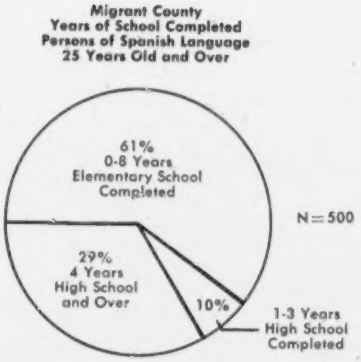
Graphs can make data for 1970 more meaningful or show 1960-1970 comparisons. A circle graph could be developed for "years of school completed" by combining the number of males and females in each educational level—from "no years" through "4 years or more of college" —and changing totals to percentages. A bar graph would probably be more satisfactory for making comparisons between 1960 and 1970.











Implications

Statistics have many uses. At budget planning time, comparative data for 1960 and 1970 can be helpful in developing arguments for program expansion. Comparative data can also be used for evaluation of the ABE program itself. Data may indicate the need for teaching English as a second language or for a special effort to recruit persons between ages 16 and 21.

Tables and graphs can be used in various ways. Presentations before the board of education, coworkers, and community groups can be made more interesting and effective. Eye-catching overhead transparencies or slides can help tell the local ABE story. The annual report to the superintendent and board of education can be more meaningful. More potential ABE students can be reached and recruited.

3. Developing Community Partnerships

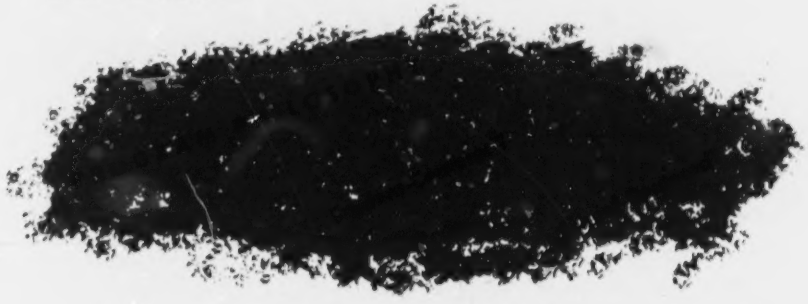
Cosponsorship of ABE classes under community partnership agreements are mutually beneficial and one of the most effective means of student recruitment. More important, community partnerships can provide students with broadened services in such areas as vocational training, health, employment, and social welfare.

Partnership Motives

The primary motive of a business partnership is usually profit. The underlying motive of an ABE community partnership is to provide improved services for people. Basic principles for both partnerships are the same:

- The partners work together in a common effort which is expected to be mutually beneficial.
- Each partner assumes a share of responsibility and makes an individual contribution to the total effort.
- The partners agree that in working together they can accomplish more than they could on an individual basis.
- The partnership is based on personal understanding, trust, and mutual agreement as to method of operation.

Why should a school district, which has sufficient funds to operate its own program, become involved in partnerships with other community agencies? Why should a local director possibly sacrifice authority to work with agencies that may be considered competitors? The answer to these questions lies in the philosophical direction of the local ABE program.



An ABE program needs comprehensive student recruitment, effective counseling, and adult-oriented instructional methods. Partnership

arrangements, in both urban and rural communities, can help with these dimensions and add others. Scores of organizations providing health services, public and private employment services, public and social welfare services, and church and recreational services have a commitment to undereducated adults.

Several steps an ABE director can take to develop community partnerships are:

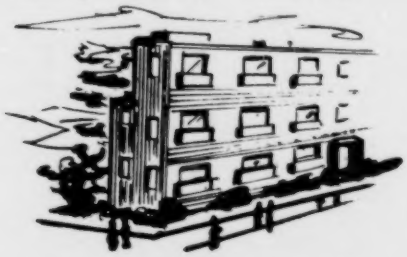
- *Identify community agencies and business and industrial organizations having a commitment to potential ABE students.* Become personally acquainted with the directors of such agencies and organizations. The local United Appeal office, State Employment Service office, Chamber of Commerce, public library, labor organizations, association of ministers, and business leaders can provide names and addresses of prospective partners.
- *Call on agency directors to learn the goals of their respective programs, their problems, and their aspirations.* Many of these directors will be unfamiliar with the local ABE program. Explain what you are trying to accomplish. Discuss some of the problems of providing health and job placement services. A frank discussion of ABE operational problems, such as finding appropriate daytime classroom space, may suggest a mutually beneficial reason for a partnership.
- *Accept qualified directors of community agencies as senior partners, rather than junior partners.* When an ABE director is willing to enter into such an arrangement, an important step has been taken in ABE partnerships. Working within the framework of state ABE guidelines, each partner agrees to assume specific responsibilities—student recruitment, counseling, health services, instruction, job placement, follow-up, and other student services.

OHIO STATE
EMPLOYMENT SERVICE

obes

Partnership Considerations

Partnership agreements are seldom reached in one contact, and not all agencies will show an interest in a partnership arrangement with the public schools. *If there appears to be a genuine interest, explore specific ways in which cooperative efforts would be mutually beneficial.* Examples include the following:



The public housing authority may be interested in having tenants learn about consumer economics and care of household equipment. If ABE provides this instruction, the housing authority may be willing to provide classroom space.

The local agriculture extension service may be interested in ABE instruction that is related to learning to read instructions for proper use of feed, seed, fertilizers, and farm machinery. The extension office may be willing to help with recruitment and provide some reading materials.

Restaurant owners, building managers, factory foremen, municipal services administrators, and other employers may be interested because they want their employees to be able to read job instructions and safety precautions. Management may be willing to make some released-time arrangements.

Many considerations are a part of any partnership arrangement. Among them are the following:

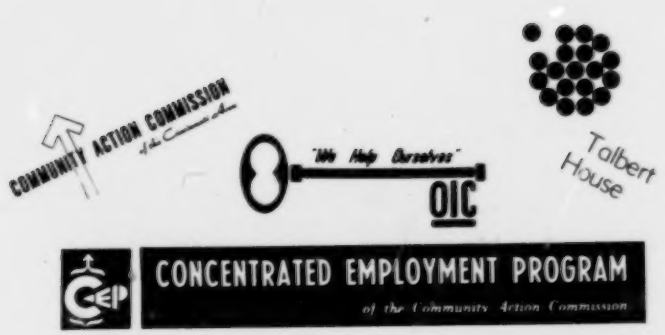
- *Mutually agree on the services each partner is to perform.* Each organization logically performs those services which it does best and is prepared to finance. Recruiting students may be easy for an industry, but locating a certified teacher and selecting instructional materials may be quite difficult. Successful partnerships are usually those in which responsibilities of partners are agreed on in advance and in writing—good business practice to avoid later misunderstandings.

- *Familiarize each partner with the guidelines under which ABE must operate.* For example, teachers must be employed by the board of education and supervised by the school system.
- *Familiarize yourself with the regulations under which each partner must operate.* The most successful partnerships appear to be those in which each partner shares some financial responsibility—such as expenses for student recruitment, announcements, or non-school facilities.
- *Be prepared to share success or failure.* Some partnerships fail because one partner receives more recognition than the other, especially in newspaper and television reports. One method of eliminating this problem is to collaborate on feature stories, using quotes by both directors. In the final analysis, the ABE director is responsible for serving as many people as possible—irrespective of who receives the credit.
- *Maintain a close working relationship with each partner, especially during the organizational and early operational periods.* Even after a partnership is firmly established, schedule regular meetings to evaluate the program and plan improvements.
- *Encourage staff members to participate actively in at least one community organization concerned with the welfare of undereducated people.* Partnerships are usually based on face-to-face acquaintance and interest in common problems.
- *Ask students about potential partners.* Students can often provide valuable information about neighborhood organizations.
- *Have partners help gear reading materials to specific interests.* Industries can sometimes provide easy-to-read, job-related materials. Students like instructional materials that have purpose and meaning for them.

YOUNGSTOWN
SHEET AND TUBE

Champion

Western Electric



► *Adapt individualized instruction approaches to the community partnership concept.* Many adults cannot attend regular ABE classes due to travel distance, home responsibilities, irregular work hours, or other valid reasons. Under a partnership agreement with a neighborhood organization, such as a church or public library, it might be possible to operate a mini-lab with a trained paraprofessional from the community working under the direction of a teacher. Organize the hours of the mini-lab so that students can come at their convenience.

Implications

The community partnership concept provides opportunities to take classes either to people in their own neighborhoods or to their places of employment. Partnerships provide greater flexibility in the scheduling of daytime classes and may help to bring students into direct contact with agencies providing health, employment, and social welfare services. Duplication of effort is sometimes avoided through partnership with community organizations.

Community partnerships often lead to steps beyond the usual direct and indirect student recruitment methods. Partnerships often strengthen rather than weaken ABE programs—provided the primary concern focuses on helping individual students.

The major objection to developing partnerships appears to be time. Many administrative hours are needed to work directly with community agencies. The ABE administrator must set his priorities and use available time wisely. For example, time spent working with agencies and organizations may pay better dividends in student recruitment than time used in indirect recruitment. Hours invested in locating daytime class space in school buildings may be better spent organizing partnership classes outside school buildings.

Developing more effective methods for reaching greater numbers of people who need ABE instruction is a challenge for every ABE director. Therefore, all ABE programs should be moved toward the community concept of total educational involvement.

4. Planning a Balanced Program

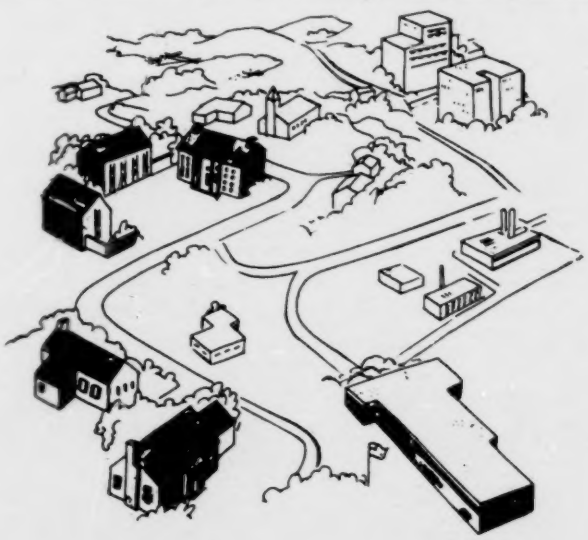
Successful ABE programs appear to have several common characteristics, all based on carefully selected administrative priorities and comprehensive planning. A time balance is maintained in class scheduling. A place balance is maintained in the physical location of classes. Balance is also important in the use of instructional methods and the content of instructional materials.

Time

In every community, large or small, there are workers and homemakers who are unable to attend evening classes due to work schedules or home responsibilities. *Schedule morning, early afternoon, late afternoon, and weekend classes—as well as evening classes—to make opportunities available to all adults.* If the district now has only evening classes, consider adding one or two daytime classes and gradually build a balanced program of daytime and evening classes or learning laboratory hours.

Location

Take ABE beyond the school's four walls. Churches, neighborhood centers, public housing projects, businesses, and industries will often provide classroom facilities without charge. An ABE class can be conducted with a limited amount of instructional equipment, making decentralization relatively easy to manage. Community center space is



generally available during the day when space in public schools is often limited. Use of non-school space in familiar neighborhood surroundings can have definite advantages for students, including savings in transportation costs. Frequently, ABE instruction in industrial plants can be directly related to students' jobs. Just as important, cosponsoring classes in community agency facilities can lead to serving a greater number of people.

Select community classroom facilities with care. Make certain they meet health and safety standards for adult instruction. The use of community centers may present a problem in the area of transporting and storing supplies and equipment. The teacher in a community facility often works in isolation from other staff members and the responsibilities of supervision are frequently increased. Nevertheless, the advantages usually far outweigh administrative inconvenience.

Instructional Methods

Encourage teachers to use a variety of instructional materials to achieve specific program objectives. Teachers and administrators sometimes favor one method over other equally effective methods. Students reaching learning plateaus become bored with one particular method if it is used to excess. Group discussion, problem solving, and teacher demonstration have a place in the learning laboratory as well as in the classroom. Particular instructional techniques, including various multimedia methods, do not work equally well with all groups or all individuals. Flexibility in instructional methods is just as important as flexibility in program scheduling.

Instructional Content

Encourage teachers to maintain a balance between professional and informal instructional materials. Most ABE materials are prepared professionally and meet the essential technical requirements for good reading and arithmetic instruction. Many commercial reading and arithmetic materials relate to the everyday personal problems of adult learners, but careful selection is essential.

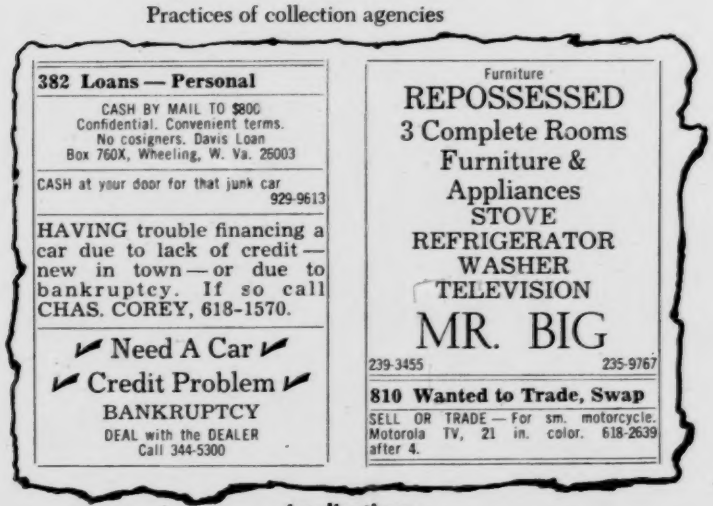
Before a wide variety of commercial materials became available, many teachers used informal instructional materials such as income tax forms, employment application forms, installment sales contracts, food and consumer goods labels, loan company advertisements, daily newspapers, and telephone books. Many teachers still believe that informal instructional materials are effective for use in conjunction with professionally prepared materials. *The use of informal materials should be encouraged, not dismissed as being obsolete.* In some instances, informal materials are closely related to the everyday problems of students.

Have students help collect informal reading materials. Practice in reading the instructions on household and medical supplies, traffic laws, driver's license instructions, free merchandise offers, discount coupons, and other everyday materials can give both life and meaning to instruction in reading and arithmetic.

Suggest the development of teacher-made materials which will help students spend their limited income wisely. Learning the skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic is not enough. The student must see immediate value in these skills—such as better use of his money.

Encourage teachers to learn more about problems which concern ABE students. Financial problems, family record keeping, and budgeting under a limited income are serious concerns for many ABE students. The scope of these problems is simply not within the realm of experience of most teachers. Many teachers are unfamiliar with:

Borrowing money from a pawnshop
Borrowing money on a signature loan
Garnisheeing of wages
Going into personal bankruptcy
Buying and financing a third-hand used car
Repossession of a car or furniture
Practices of collection agencies



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Implications

Time, class locations, instructional methods, and instructional content must all be considered in planning a balanced ABE program. Relevance is equally important. Why should an adult take the time to learn to read and write unless he can see immediate personal benefits? Relating basic skills instruction to the everyday problems of ABE students is of utmost importance.

The fact that many teachers are unfamiliar with the problems ABE students face should be considered when plans are made for preservice and inservice teacher education programs. The rewards of a balanced program make the efforts worthwhile—for students, teachers, and directors.

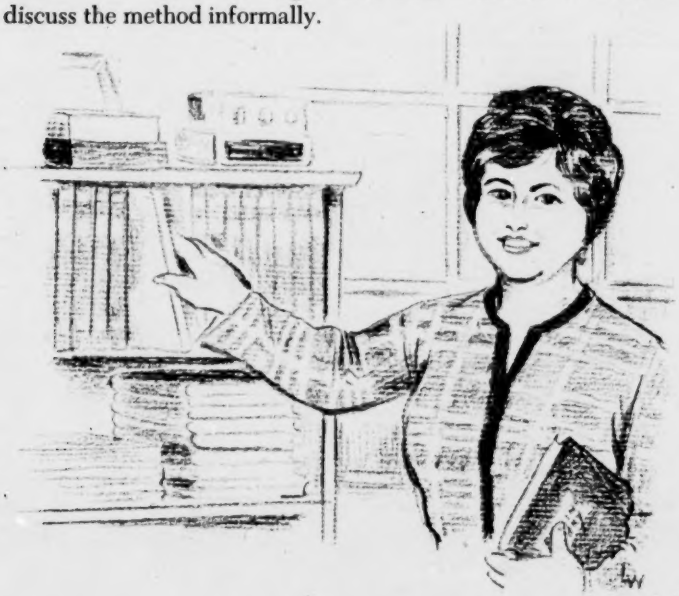
5. Selecting Instructional Materials and Equipment

Instructional materials especially designed for ABE instruction were almost non-existent a few years ago. Now many choices are available. Sound procedures must be used for evaluating both instructional materials and equipment. The purchase of the wrong "tools" can impede the development of a successful program.

Evaluation Suggestions

The evaluation of instructional materials and equipment can be part of teacher inservice education. The risk of unused or improperly used materials and idle equipment is substantially reduced when teachers are directly involved in evaluation and final selection.

- Encourage teachers to investigate, an vze, and try out new instructional materials and new types of audiovisual equipment.
- Place sample instructional materials in the ABE professional library or resource center. Urge teachers to examine them.
- When teachers feel that a certain instructional method or approach has possibilities for the improvement of instruction, arrange for trial use of that idea. Encourage other staff members to observe and discuss the method informally.



- When a piece of equipment appears to be highly satisfactory, have participating teachers demonstrate its use at an inservice meeting. "Hands-on experience" for all teachers, especially with new audio-visual equipment, should be part of the demonstration.
- Evaluation of materials, equipment, and the proper use of instructional tools should be an ongoing process.
- Do not attempt to evaluate and select materials and equipment solely at the administrative level. The sheer volume available makes such a procedure impractical. Furthermore, teachers frequently challenge new instructional methods and materials when they are not involved in the evaluation process.
- Work with teachers in the development of a checklist for evaluating materials and equipment. The checklist should be built around the special characteristics of ABE programming, for example:

  Are the backgrounds and needs of ABE students recognized?

  Are the learning activities related to the interests of ABE students?

  Is the vocabulary satisfactory for ABE reading levels?

  Are the directions clear and simple?

  Is further study on the part of the student encouraged?

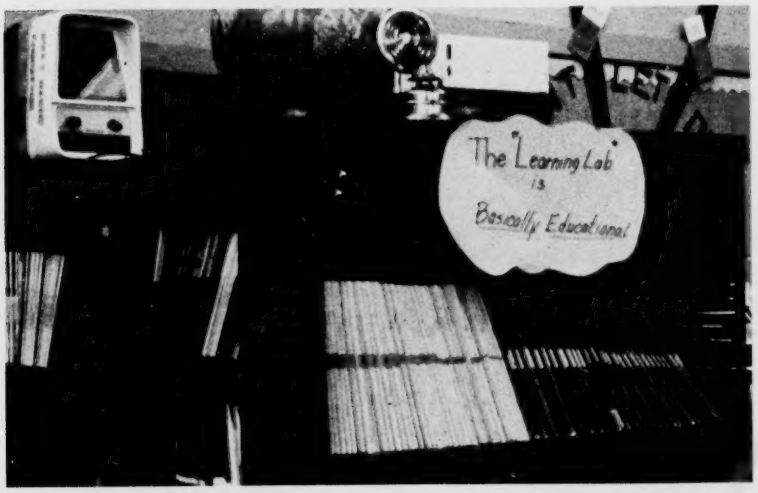
  Can the student move ahead at his own pace and achieve maximum progress?

  Is the material constructed with short-term goals so that the student can feel a sense of accomplishment after each use?

  Are suggestions for instruction provided for the teacher?

  Are the mechanics of the materials, such as the size of the print and the layout of pages, suitable for ABE students?

  Are pretests and post-tests available?



- Include the mechanics of equipment operation in the preservice training program. Keep extra copies of equipment manuals in the library or resource center.
- Evaluate methods and techniques at least once a year. Do they improve student progress? How well do adult students like particular methods or materials? Teacher enthusiasm for a method sometimes overshadows facts about student progress or how well students like certain materials. An evaluation of an experimental program is essential before moving to full-scale use of the materials or equipment.

Implications

Directors have a responsibility for creating a climate for instructional change—well-planned, step-by-step change involving teachers. Teachers should constantly seek out, try out, and evaluate new methods and materials.

After new instructional materials and equipment are purchased, directors should make certain teachers know how to use them properly. Teachers then have the responsibility to follow through. If certain material or equipment is seldom used, the director should try to learn why.

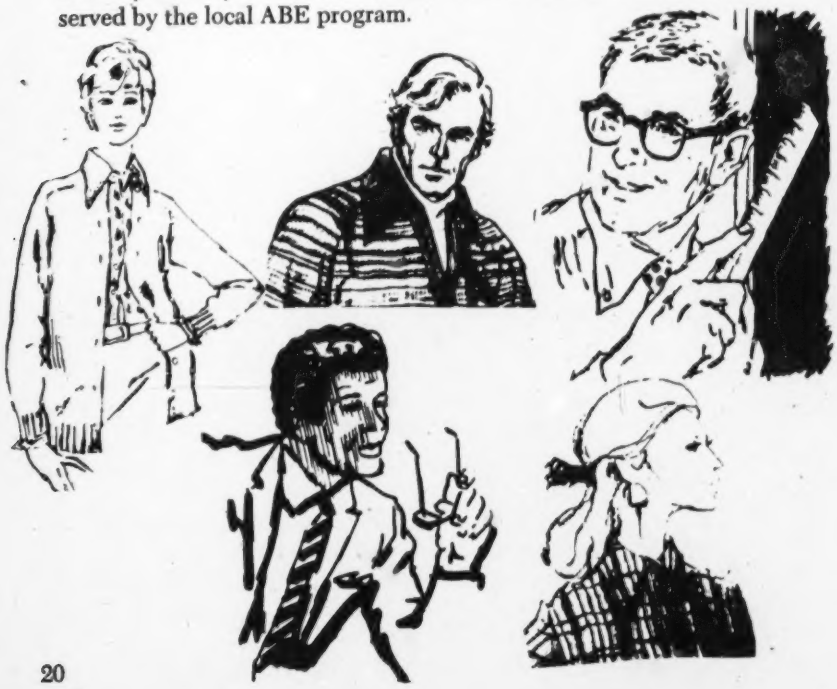
6. Employing Talented Teachers

Most teachers and administrators agree that teaching in ABE is a demanding but highly rewarding experience. It calls for special talents and a positive, inquiring outlook that goes far beyond the usual teaching situation.

Teacher Talents

What are the special talents an ABE teacher needs? What is the positive outlook administrators must seek to identify in the teacher selection process? Three considerations follow:

► *The prospective teacher should be willing to break with traditional teaching methods.* Many experienced teachers have a mastery of particular subjects. Too frequently, they are satisfied with the methods used in the teaching of children and see no reason to change these methods when teaching adults. Success in the ABE classroom or learning laboratory goes far beyond the mastery of subject matter and teaching methods. For example, the applicant should be willing to study and try to understand the cultural patterns of the people served by the local ABE program.



► *An ABE teacher should recognize the need for additional professional training and be willing to engage in local and state ABE preservice and inservice activities.* A prospective teacher's willingness and desire for professional growth is directly related to a willingness to break with traditional instructional methods. Many applicants have little professional preparation for teaching adults. One reason is that most teacher training institutions limit such training to graduate programs.

► *An ABE teacher must have the ability to relate with adult students.* While no one teacher can physically or socially be a direct representative of each ethnic group served by ABE, the ability to relate with people should be a major consideration in teacher selection.

Empathy goes far deeper than common courtesy. Empathy distinguishes the master teacher from the practitioner. Dominant factors are a deep appreciation of the cultural patterns of learners and a thorough understanding of their social and economic life. Empathy is difficult to achieve completely, but successful ABE teachers do quite well. More such teachers are needed.

Teacher Sources

Experienced teachers who have resigned from full-time positions to accept home responsibilities are an excellent source of part-time ABE teachers. To recruit such teachers, check school personnel records or contact local parent-teacher associations, community service organizations, neighborhood centers, churches, and volunteer leadership training programs. When a highly qualified ABE teacher moves to another community, give the teacher a note of introduction to the local director.

Successful, full-time elementary and secondary teachers are potential ABE teachers provided they have the physical stamina for both daytime and evening work. In addition, they should have the time, interest, and willingness to participate in ABE preservice and inservice training.

Selection Techniques

- *Use an application form that has been approved by the local board of education.* ABE teacher application forms should include educational training, teaching experience, related volunteer or social service work experience, the type and number of the teaching certificate held by the applicant, Social Security number, and other data required by the clerk-treasurer of the board of education and the State Department of Education.
- *Ask the applicant to submit a brief statement as to why he or she wants to teach in the program or why the applicant feels qualified to do so.* Such a statement can be used for screening and interview purposes.
- *Interview the applicant personally.* Whenever possible, a representative of the personnel office of the school system and one or more ABE staff members should be involved. The applicant may be unfamiliar with ABE. The interview offers an opportunity to describe the purpose of the program and general responsibilities of the teacher.
- *Present a common ABE instructional problem.* The applicant might be asked how he thinks classroom tests should be used. Listen to the applicant's reaction as it relates to empathy. Does the candidate have a genuine feeling for people? The interview committee may or may not be able to determine this, but not so ABE students. They quickly spot teacher insincerity. Frequently, student reaction to a teacher's lack of empathy is to quit the class.

- *If possible, observe the applicant working in a classroom or laboratory setting.* Some school systems employ ABE applicants on a substitute basis. This enables the teacher to participate in the preservice training program and have some classroom experience before being hired on a regular basis. Under this plan, the director has the opportunity to make one or more classroom observations before a part-time or full-time appointment is recommended. Another advantage is that ABE students often feel cheated if a substitute teacher is unprepared. A corps of trained substitute teachers reduces this problem. Substitute teachers with some ABE training and experience offer a more satisfactory personnel plan than a last minute frantic search for a teacher.
- *File all application forms and memoranda related to the interview and classroom observation.* A brief statement as to the disposition of the application should also be filed. Many ABE directors want the authority to choose their own teachers. This entails definite responsibilities—including the proper recording of seemingly insignificant details which have legal implications on teacher tenure.

Implications

Directors generally agree that much of the success of the ABE program depends on the teachers. If this is true, careful selection of teachers is an administrative responsibility of the highest priority.

Some directors indicate that student recruitment is their major concern. It may be that the selection and training of teachers who have empathy and who know how to instruct adults may, in the long run, be the best means of recruiting and holding students.

7. Training Teachers — Preservice

Should regularly certified teachers with no preparation for instructing adults and no experience teaching adults be assigned to ABE classrooms or learning centers without preservice training? Most authorities agree that the quality of ABE instruction, especially during the first few sessions, is a critical factor in retaining students. The practice of employing untrained teachers is a serious, perplexing concern of many directors.

Reasons for Concern

The use of untrained personnel is unfair to both teachers and students. Much time and effort devoted to student recruitment, selection of materials and equipment, and other important activities can be nullified. The reasons trained ABE teachers are unavailable provides possible clues to a solution:

- Almost no teacher training institutions have preparation for instructing adults as a part of their undergraduate programs. Several excellent graduate programs are available in adult administration and ABE instructional methods and procedures. However, few teachers work toward advanced degrees in anticipation of part-time teaching.
- Many new approaches to ABE inservice training have been developed in recent years. However, inservice programs on local, state, and national levels are usually designed for practicing teachers. Most research studies and professional writing are concerned with inservice rather than preservice training.
- Summer preservice workshops once provided training for most new teachers. Now, in some communities, as many teachers are employed during the year as in September or October. Learning centers and individualized instructional methods have made it possible for students to enroll throughout the calendar year. Home instruction programs may begin any time. New classes in partnership with business and industry and community agencies are organized throughout the year—meaning teachers enter the program at different times.

- Continuous teacher employment demands a continuous preservice training program. Group preservice training methods are no longer adequate. Individualized teacher training methods, as opposed to group instructional methods, are a necessity.
- The development and operation of an effective preservice program can be a time-consuming responsibility. Administrators generally agree that preservice training should have a high priority. Yet, many ABE directors serve on a part-time basis and, of necessity, must select their administrative priorities. If only one or two new teachers are employed a year, the director finds it difficult to justify the time and expense involved in a local preservice program.

Cooperative Solutions

One solution to the preservice problem is to organize and operate a cooperative training program. Many of the barriers to an effective preservice program are removed when school districts within an immediate area pool their personnel resources and budget allocations for teacher training.

Preservice training offered by the local district, or as a combined effort by several districts, might provide new teachers with opportunities to do the following:

- Observe ABE instruction in several classrooms and laboratories.
- Learn the needs of ABE students and ABE instructional methods through use of specially prepared video recordings, audio tapes, films, and programmed instructional materials.

- Study the ABE instructional materials used in local classrooms or laboratories.
- Become familiar with the operation of instructional equipment.
- Become acquainted with the building and its facilities.
- Meet informally with other teachers, counselors, administrators, and other staff members in the local ABE program.
- Read professional growth pamphlets, books, and materials.
- Meet as often as necessary during the training period with the local director or supervisor. Counseling and reassurance to the trainee are essential during preservice training.
- Become familiar with local administrative policies and practices. Teacher reports and unfamiliar classroom or laboratory procedures can be frustrating. If such details are included in the preservice training, the teacher can devote maximum time and energy to instruction during the all-important first days on the job. A teacher handbook and other pertinent materials should be made available to trainees by each participating district.
- Coordinate preservice training with inservice training. During the first weeks in the classroom or laboratory, the new teacher should have daily access to professional assistance if need be. Consideration should be given to assigning an experienced teacher to work with the new teacher during this period.

Implications

Many new teachers, through circumstances beyond the control of ABE leadership, enter the classroom or laboratory with little or no preparation for teaching ABE students. How many adults drop from the program and sacrifice their last opportunity for an education because the teacher is unprepared? No one knows. The time lag between initial employment and the opportunity for inservice training is a void which must be filled if ABE is to function at an effective level.

The employment of teachers on a continuing basis throughout the calendar year necessitates preservice training on an ongoing basis. This may mean preservice training on an individualized basis rather than through traditional group methods. Individualization of instruction is applicable to teacher preparation as well as student instruction.

Many administrative problems cannot be solved by the director alone, especially not in a smaller community with a part-time director. Cooperative training efforts among districts offer many possibilities for better use of personnel resources and funds. In the final analysis, local directors must assign their program priorities and the importance of preservice training should not be overlooked.

8. Training Teachers — Inservice

Many ABE programs have one or more teachers whom the director considers to be outstanding. Few students drop from the classes of these teachers. A majority of the students demonstrate significant improvement in basic skills. Many secure employment as a result of the teachers' efforts. Directors often ask themselves, "What can I do to encourage or stimulate other teachers to this level of teaching competence?" The best available method appears to be a good inservice teacher training program.

Teacher Competencies and Learning Considerations

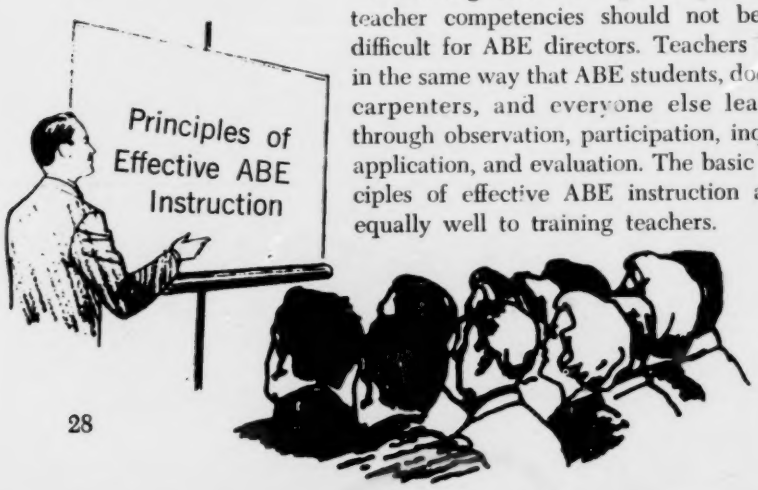
The first step in planning an inservice program might be identifying the competencies, or combination of competencies, of outstanding teachers. The following are often recognized:

- ► Enthusiasm for ABE combined with a strong desire to improve personal teaching competencies.
- ► A genuine interest in and understanding of the adult learner.
- ► A thorough knowledge and understanding of the subject matter.
- ► Skillful use of appropriate instructional techniques.

The second step in planning an effective inservice program is to select appropriate learning methods. Consider the following:

- ► How teachers can gain better insight into problems of ABE students.
- ► How the teachers' empathy with students can be further developed.
- ► How teachers' understanding of the subject matter can be improved.
- ► How all staff members can be motivated toward greater effort.

Deciding how to improve particular teacher competencies should not be too difficult for ABE directors. Teachers learn in the same way that ABE students, doctors, carpenters, and everyone else learns—through observation, participation, inquiry, application, and evaluation. The basic principles of effective ABE instruction apply equally well to training teachers.



The teacher who constantly lectures to students is considered ineffective. Yet, the most common form of inservice training is to bring in a resource person to lecture to teachers on how to improve their instruction. Invariably, in planning an inservice program, the first question is, "What outstanding authorities are available to address the group?" Small group discussions may follow the address to provide an opportunity for teacher participation. This often terminates the inservice training program. There has been no inquiry, no application, and only superficial participation and evaluation. What has been presented may soon be forgotten by the teacher.

To plan an effective inservice training program, a number of factors should be recognized:

- The capabilities of teachers vary. Inservice training should not begin at the same place for all teachers any more than instruction should begin at the same place for all students.
- Training should be directly related to the needs of individual teachers. Some teachers need to improve their knowledge and skill in teaching adults to read. Others need a better understanding of the adult learner. A few will need to be encouraged, or even prodded, into using their full capabilities as teachers.
- A close relationship should be developed between what is to be learned and the selection of a learning method.
- Resource people with first-hand experience in teaching adults should give teachers practical suggestions for immediate use in the classroom or learning laboratory.
- Outstanding teachers in the local program are valuable resource people. Representatives of community agencies who work directly with students in other situations should also be considered.

► Locally prepared video tapes and films can be valuable tools of inservice training and conserve the time and energy of resource people. An ABE professional library should be stocked with carefully selected materials and should be readily accessible to all teachers.

Effective inservice training should have a twofold purpose—helping individual teachers grow professionally and improving the local program.

Observation and Participation

Observation and participation are the methods most commonly used for inservice training. The following activities illustrate ways in which these two methods can be used:

► Create opportunities for teachers to visit other ABE programs to observe instructional methods, special services for students, and administrative procedures. Observations often provide the seeds for new ideas. Visits can also be reassuring. Teachers may find the local program is stronger than they thought. Hopefully, they will also discover ways to improve their own effort.

► Arrange for teachers to visit community service organizations to learn more about the day-to-day concerns of ABE students. There are dozens of such community service agencies. Since it will be impossible for teachers to visit them all, short interview-type video recordings are possible substitutes. Pamphlets from the Better Business Bureau, Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, Veterans Administration, and other agencies should be available for teacher reference and study.

► Have groups of teachers collect, review, and select professional materials which should be of direct help to individual teachers and inservice planning committees. Few administrators have the time to locate and screen research studies and professional materials which may be of value to teachers. Delegate the task; then make selected materials readily available.

► Give teachers the opportunity to demonstrate their instructional techniques to other teachers. The ability of teachers to develop effective methods and techniques should not be underestimated. Furthermore, teachers often benefit from observing the instructional methods of other teachers in the same program. Demonstrations of effective teaching performance should be handled without embarrassing either the outstanding teacher or the observers.

► Encourage teachers to report suggestions students make for program improvement. Some are excellent.

Inquiry Approach

Inquiry as a learning method is used less frequently than observation and participation. Yet, inquiry is one of the most important routes to learning. Teachers frequently ask such questions as:

In what way are students' personal problems related to teaching reading?

How effective are we working with non-readers?

Can we expect people to enroll in ABE just to learn to read and write, or must other services be provided?

Such questions may appear to be a challenge to the competence and authority of the supervisor or director. Teachers who constructively ask "Why?" are often responsible for initiating major instructional and administrative improvements. When the true spirit of constructive inquiry is established, teachers will ask such questions as:

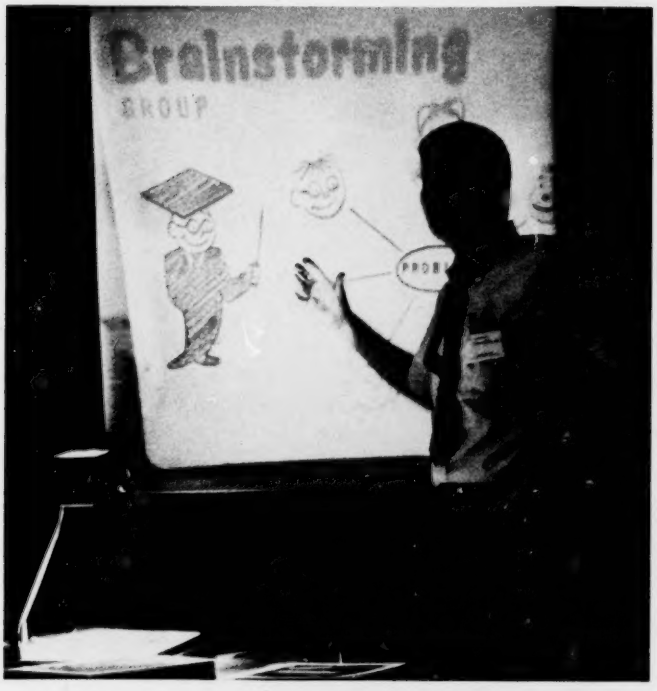
Why are ABE students sensitive to certain terms?

Why is one instructional device considered superior to another?

Why don't we have more information about students' financial problems?

Why is student recruitment a major problem?

When teachers study and investigate such questions, inservice training can become a professional growth program dealing directly with major local issues.



Application Techniques

Problem solving, based on facts, is an important phase of student learning. Problem solving is also important for teacher learning. Most people, including teachers, learn best through solving actual rather than simulated problems. Application may be as simple as "hands on experience" with a piece of instructional equipment under consideration for purchase. Or, application may be as involved as developing a plan for the continuous self-evaluation of the ABE program.

Except in cases of extreme urgency, most directors do not have the time or the energy to develop comprehensive plans for the improvement of instruction. In addition, such plans must be sold to teachers—a task in itself. Curriculum development is an effective inservice professional growth activity. *Encourage teachers to develop a curriculum based on student objectives rather than philosophical or teacher-determined goals.*

Beginning teachers frequently have difficulty making the transfer from broad educational objectives to practical student objectives. *Give beginners ample opportunity to solve their instructional problems.* Review proposed solutions with them. Let them try feasible ideas. Their approaches may work surprisingly well and provide redirection for a program.

Evaluation

ABE students like to know how they are progressing. Teachers, like students, want to know how much their performance has improved. A common complaint of teachers is that no one ever visits their classes. Teachers have the right and obligation to self-evaluate their own progress regularly and discuss their progress with the director or supervisor. Weaknesses in teaching performances are usually not terminal. The inservice training program provides the opportunity for improvement in teaching performance and an opportunity for re-evaluation.

Inservice training is directly related to supervision of teachers. Teacher self-evaluation can point up weaknesses. Inservice training can help the teacher overcome identified weaknesses and improve teaching performance. The director has the responsibility of helping the teacher follow through in the classroom or learning laboratory.

Inservice as a Cohesive Force

Many ABE teachers in rural areas work apart from other teachers. The same situation exists in urban areas where teachers work alone in neighborhood centers, public housing projects, or business and industry facilities. Other ABE teachers are isolated in an adult high school or general adult education center.

Taking ABE classes to the students, in both rural and urban areas, is highly desirable. This does, however, increase the need for arranged teacher-to-teacher contacts. The instructional problems and the interests of ABE teachers in rural and urban areas are often similar. *Drive-in workshops serving specific geographic areas work quite well.*

Interest in Saturday inservice activities has also increased. Teachers of morning, afternoon, and evening ABE classes like to meet together to consider mutual concerns.

Implications

If educational services for ABE students are to be substantially improved, preservice and inservice training can no longer be considered as perfunctory activities. Time must be provided for such training. Sufficient funds must be budgeted.

Learning is not as simple as pouring water into a bottle. Inservice training, if it is to be more than teacher indoctrination, must be based on a mutual understanding of what the teacher needs to learn. The stage is then set to use every method of learning in a variety of training situations.

Some types of inservice training can be best accomplished in the local school system. Others are more effective if they are provided as a cooperative effort. The trend is for several districts to join together in inservice training and other activities which are mutually beneficial. Such ventures can effectively supplement services offered on a statewide basis.

Research studies indicate why preservice and inservice training is important. Many formal evaluations of ABE programs throughout the country indicate what needs to be done to improve programs. But it remains for directors to implement ways and means for substantially improving teaching performance.

9. Recruiting and Training Paraprofessionals

Paraprofessionals have been used for years as clerical and teacher aides, but new roles are being developed in ABE programming. In many communities, paraprofessionals assist with recruitment of students. Individualization of instruction has increased the need for learning laboratory assistants, classroom aides, and home instruction aides. Most directors regard paraprofessionals as very important members of the ABE team.

Recruitment of Paraprofessionals

Students who have completed the ABE program are among the best candidates for paraprofessionals. They are familiar with the program and enthusiastic about its purpose. Ministers, PTA officers, and community leaders can often suggest other recruits.

Learn why an individual wants to become a paraprofessional. Many applicants consider it an opportunity to learn new skills, a chance to help "my people," a change from daily routines, or a way to supplement the family income. As one paraprofessional remarked, "They needed me and wanted me."

Training and Supervision

The training and supervision of paraprofessionals presents special problems. Administrators must recognize these problems and adjust training methods and supervisory techniques accordingly.

► Teachers may feel that the employment of paraprofessionals will reduce the number of professional staff members needed. The employment of paraprofessionals is therefore a threat to their professional security. Teachers must be assured that paraprofessionals are employed to strengthen educational services. Teachers may fear that the employment of paraprofessionals will lower educational standards. *A positive method of overcoming such concern is to use teachers with leadership ability to train paraprofessionals.*

- Paraprofessionals often need more encouragement and direction than teachers. The paraprofessional is generally expected to learn quickly many things about the purpose of the program, operational policies, and specific job responsibilities. Learning how to plan their work is often difficult. Help may be needed in learning names, establishing rapport with students, and scores of other matters which teachers may take for granted. *Use teachers on a daily basis for the personal guidance and supervision of paraprofessionals.*
- Paraprofessionals have different aptitudes and skills. Some are effective in recruiting students or following-up on student absences. Others can provide maximum service in scoring objective tests, demonstrating instructional equipment, or assisting individual students. *Match the work to be done with the interests, aptitudes, and skills of the paraprofessional.* Short-term assignments may help determine the type of work best suited for individual paraprofessionals.
- Every paraprofessional should have a thorough orientation to the ABE program, including its objectives. *Encourage teacher-trainers to concentrate on the type of service to be performed.* Paraprofessionals are usually more interested in how to do a particular job well than they are in philosophical concepts.
- *Offer in-depth training in relation to the tasks to be performed.* To illustrate, the recruitment of students requires a complete sales training program while the scoring of objective tests requires a much different orientation.

► Recognition of their work is as important to the paraprofessional as it is to a teacher. The successful completion of preservice training should be recognized through some form of personal recognition. *As the paraprofessional gains experience, provide the opportunity for job advancement.* Teacher-trainers are largely responsible for the success of paraprofessionals. They should receive recognition for these services.

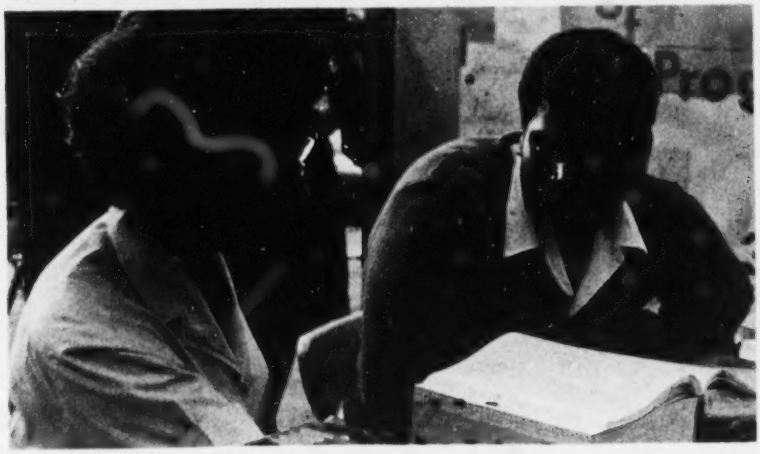
In some programs, the paraprofessional is not considered a part of the instructional team. The truth of the matter is their relationship with the community may be better than that of teachers. Provide ample opportunity for paraprofessionals to meet with all ABE teachers to share problems, discuss educational plans, and make suggestions for program improvement.

Implications

The selection of paraprofessionals is as important as the selection of teachers. An ongoing training program, combined with continuous guidance and supervision by teacher-trainers, appears to be one of the best methods of preparing paraprofessionals.

Work particularly suited for the paraprofessional varies. An important area is personal recruitment of students. The trend toward individualized instruction in learning laboratories, classrooms, and home instruction programs is also increasing the demand for trained paraprofessionals.

Most directors feel that ABE must offer students far more than reading instruction. Supplementary services which provide immediate help to students can be expanded only to the extent of available staff. The use of paraprofessionals is one of the best solutions to providing additional services for students.



10. Selling ABE to Prospective Students

Most people enroll in ABE because they want education for more than the sake of education. Recruiters are frequently asked questions such as:

I have a job, so why should I give up my evenings to come back to school?
Will the time I spend in ABE help me get a better job?
Why should I risk embarrassment by going to school? I'm on welfare.
Will I have a better chance of getting off welfare if I go back to school?
Will I learn how to buy more with my money?
Will I be able to help my children with schoolwork?

A desire for economic security, as provided by a job, is basic for most people. A desire for social approval—demonstrated by an attractive home, an impressive car, a color television set, and other material things—is also important. The ability to read and write is a fundamental need in our society. Potential students will usually enroll if they can be assured that the ABE program will be of direct, personal benefit.

Prospective students recognize that there is a relationship between the amount of an individual's education and the amount of his earnings. Yet, for many people, an education beginning with basic reading and writing seems a long, tortuous process. ABE recruiters must be able to identify and sell the immediate benefits to be derived from going back to school. A good salesman, or recruiter, can translate buying motives into appeals which will convince prospective students that ABE does have immediate personal value. The recruiter must be prepared to counter every negative response made by the prospective buyer, or student.

Buying Motive	Sales Appeal
Making money	ABE cannot promise you a job or a better job. However, many people who complete the ABE program do get a job or move ahead on their present job. Learning a job skill, along with learning to read and write, helps.
Saving money	Being able to shop and compare prices on food and drug items and being able to understand installment sales contracts can save you money.
Better health	Being able to read the labels on medicine bottles, household supplies, and canned foods is essential. Understanding instructions on household and industrial equipment is important for personal safety. Our teachers can help you learn to read and our counselors know the agencies that provide health services.
Protection and help for loved ones	Your children should get a better start in school if you can help them with reading and writing.
Companionship	It's fun to spend a few evenings a week with friends and neighbors. Adult education centers are not like the elementary classrooms you remember as a child.
Adventure and curiosity	Books and equipment used in the ABE center are quite interesting. You can learn as fast as you like and move ahead on your own.

Know Your Customers

A knowledge and understanding of potential customers, or students, is essential. This principle applies to both direct and indirect sales methods. Develop an appreciation of family traditions and an understanding of the cultural patterns of potential students as a part of the preservice and inservice training for teachers and paraprofessionals. For example, staff members should understand why students with Appalachia backgrounds go "down home" on weekends and holidays. An awareness of potential problems and probable reactions of students is also important.

Know Your Product

adult basic education

The product you are selling is the ABE program. Know what it has to offer. The professional literature encourages directors to establish written objectives. Yet, merely stating program objectives or the purpose of the law will not encourage many people to enroll. *Translate objectives and purpose into meaningful terms that suggest benefits for prospective students.*

Explain program advantages to prospective students. Convince them that advantages, such as the opportunity to set one's own goals, do exist. Stating the purpose of the program, in customer terms, provides sales confidence and keeps the recruitment presentation from becoming mechanical.

Develop a Positive Approach

Direct and indirect selling, with either the spoken or written word, requires a friendly attitude. Personal appearance should radiate warmth; the tone of voice, friendliness; and written communications, appeal.

Use a strong opening. Many salesmen, after introducing themselves, use a question to stimulate interest. "Mrs. Jones, would you like to save money on your food buying?" is a stronger opening than, "Mrs. Jones, why don't you come back to school and complete the fifth grade?"

The adult education brochure of Midtown, U.S.A. announces, "On September 12, ABE classes will resume at the Adult Center." Can you imagine a soap company advertising, "On September 12, we will continue to sell detergent XYZ in grocery stores." If ABE is to compete with bowling, television, and other attractive offerings—if it is to overcome the fears and apprehensions of people—program directors must use the same basic principles of selling as a company selling a particular product.

Demonstrate the service. In direct selling at home or at the learning center, give the prospective student an opportunity to try out a short lesson at an appropriate reading level. Give the prospect some "hands-on experience" with instructional equipment. Consider developing and using a brief slide presentation to create interest in the program. The gift of a one-page lesson may create interest and lead to a desire for more lessons.

Practice Your Sales Technique

Inservice training of recruiters should include opportunities to do the following:

- Role play ways to handle clients who are skeptical, timid, argumentative, or silent.
- Practice telling and showing the ABE story. Photographs and samples of instructional materials have eye appeal. Cassette recordings have ear appeal.
- Discuss ways to convince prospects to visit the program to talk with students and staff members.
- Strengthen recruiter listening techniques. Know what the client is saying.
- Practice countering client objections. Learn to distinguish between an honest objection and an excuse.
- Learn to turn objections into reasons for enrolling. Use role playing with such common objections as:

  I can't leave my children to go to school.
  It will take me too long to learn to read and write.
  I can't afford to take the bus.
  I'm afraid I'll fail again.
  I'm too old to learn.

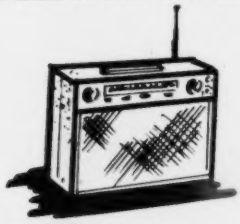
Locate Your Customers

Which sales methods produce the best results in a particular community? The use of an informal survey among students currently enrolled in the program is a common means of determining the most effective methods. Under the question "How did you learn about the ABE program?", list direct and indirect methods in current use. These may include personal contacts by recruiters; use of printed announcements; radio, television, and newspaper stories; referrals by friends, relatives, case workers, employers, and ministers; and publicity through public libraries, PTA organizations, and so forth. The following means and methods for locating prospective students are based on actual experiences of ABE directors.

Community Partnerships

- Develop partnership arrangements with churches, public and private social service organizations, public housing centers, businesses, industries, and governmental agencies. Partnerships provide one of the best means of selling ABE to large numbers of people.
- Send printed announcements about the ABE program to community agencies that have direct contact with prospective students. Use illustrations. Keep wording and sentence structure as short and simple as possible. Avoid the use of educational terms, such as *target population, behavioral objectives,* or *multi-media.*
- Publicize the ABE program as a joint effort with other community agencies. In one large city, the public library annually publishes a booklet which lists all local adult education opportunities offered by non-profit organizations.
- Explain and demonstrate the ABE program to welfare department case workers and others who have direct contact with clients.

- Conduct training programs in selling the ABE program for recruiters and volunteers working with community agencies.
- Invite immigrants, either by letter or direct contact, to attend special ABE classes for the foreign born. Names are generally available from the post office or the local Bureau of Immigration. Aliens must register at the post office during the month of January.
- Exhibit and demonstrate new types of adult reading materials and equipment at county fairs, shopping centers, school open houses, and other appropriate locations. Staff with volunteers or paraprofessionals. Provide class schedules and enrollment forms.
- Use vacant store windows for displays about the ABE program.
- Make presentations at club meetings. Members of organizations often have direct contact with potential students. Slides, overhead transparencies, and other media should be kept up-to-date and cataloged for presentations of varying length.
- Invite ministers, welfare directors, and others with an interest in ABE students to participate actively in the program. Their degree of interest in selling potential students is usually in direct relationship to their own involvement in the program.



Radio and Television

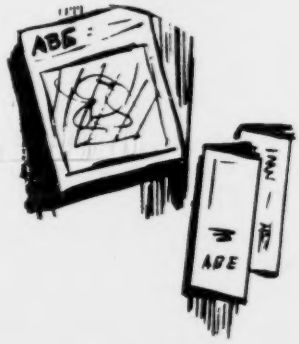
- Become personally acquainted with directors of local radio and television stations. Maintain face-to-face contact throughout the year, not just once-a-year contact by letter or telephone.
- Radio and television spot announcements should be limited to the amount of time specified by individual stations. Use students as often as possible as announcers. Students often come across better to prospective students than an educator or a professional announcer.
- Have students help plan messages for prospective students. Seek their advice on clarity and understanding.
- Investigate joining with other school districts in the geographic area for public service announcements. Adults can be urged to enroll in one of several ABE programs.
- Give special attention to stations that appeal to prospective students —for example, radio stations that specialize in country and western or soul music.

Newspapers and Other Publications

- Get to know local editors of both daily and weekly newspapers. Keep in regular contact with them.
- Newspaper feature stories about student accomplishments are often more effective than announcements. Human interest stories, which should have the approval of students mentioned by name, help to build pride in the program.
- Many industries publish in-house newspapers or magazines for their employees. Feature stories about employees and general announcements about ABE offerings are usually welcomed.

Within-the-School Partnerships

- Offer ABE classes at an evening adult center in conjunction with job preparatory and non-credit general adult education classes. When ABE classes meet in the same building as other adult classes, much of the stigma of attending "a school for adults who can't read" is removed. Further, the opportunity to prepare for a job in conjunction with ABE may be available at the same location—an important sales point.
- Organize child care centers for mothers of small children. This can sometimes be done through other areas of adult education such as parent education, general adult education, or home economics child care programs.
- Prospective students may call the school to confirm ABE schedules or seek assurance that the program is for them. The basic principles of effective selling apply —including courtesy and a pleasant voice that reflects a desire to help the caller. Keep a list of callers, phone numbers, and addresses. Send ABE sales material to them. Have a recruiter or other staff person make a personal visit.



- Use information provided by school records. Contact high school dropouts and convince them to enroll in the ABE program.
- Invite school superintendents and members of boards of education to visit classes. Set up occasional special visits to include state legislators and congressional representatives. Officials will usually not visit the program unless specifically invited to do so.

Student Contacts

- Encourage ABE students to bring their friends or relatives to the learning center.
- At the close of the program year, ask each ABE student to self-address an envelope. Send each an announcement prior to the opening of the new program.

Close the Sale

There are several effective techniques for getting client action, or student enrollment. Among them are the following:

- Offer to fill out the registration form for the prospect.
- Contrast the advantages of enrolling in the ABE program with the disadvantages.
- Review the sales points.
- Arrange a visit to the ABE center if the prospect is hesitant in making a decision.
- Accompany the prospect to a counselor or a teacher for another person's sales pitch.

Implications

Determining the effectiveness of various methods of ABE selling in relationship to administrative time and cost is an essential part of ABE management. Some directors feel that the development of an effective instructional program is the best means of selling potential students, because it results in satisfied customers. Satisfied customers are essential in maintaining enrollment, but they are not enough. Both direct and indirect sales methods are needed to build enrollment.

ABE requires a more intensive sales program than other areas of education. In general, the less education people have, the more encouragement they need to overcome fears and reservations and to weigh the value of returning to school.

How many ABE students are enrolled in the local program in relation to the adults in the community who need the program? To answer this question, use 1970 census data. If the percentage is low, an improved direct and indirect sales program is needed.

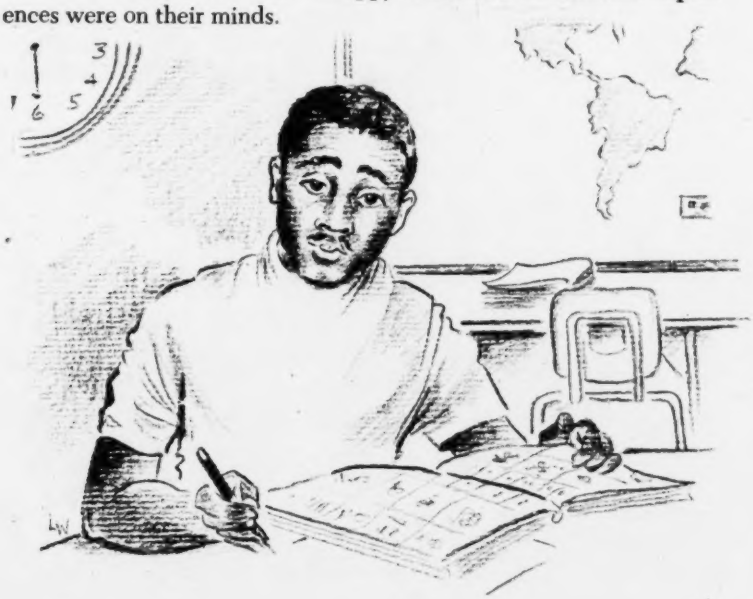
11. Creating a Climate for Learning

The ABE classroom or learning laboratory is usually a new educational experience for the adult learner. Furthermore, the decision for an adult to come back to school often requires considerable courage.

Steps to Ease Transition

A number of important steps can be taken to ease transition into ABE routines:

- *Create an inviting climate for adult learning.* Treating adults as adults begins with the first contact with the student and is reflected in efficient, friendly counseling and registration procedures by staff members.
- *Radiate a cordial attitude toward the adult learner.* This should begin the moment he comes into contact with the school. An accepting attitude helps the student overcome fears about possible embarrassment. Once the student senses that the staff is eager to help him succeed in learning, reservations about returning to school are substantially reduced. Many adults say that when they registered for the first time, memories of unhappy childhood educational experiences were on their minds.



- *Encourage teachers to use instructional materials effectively.* Each student should feel a sense of accomplishment during each session in the classroom or learning laboratory. It is vital that the adult learner experiences success immediately.
- *Help teachers to use short-term achievement goals.* The adult learner is concerned with getting results now and should help set his own short-term goals. Future goals may be unrealistic. Learning to write his name can be a dramatic accomplishment for the non-reader.
- *Urge teachers and counselors to listen carefully to what students are saying.*
- *Have staff members assure adults that age is no barrier to learning.* Adults often say they are too old to learn. Cite specific examples of older adults who were helped through ABE enrollment.
- *Recognize that adults may have hearing, visual, or other physical impairments.* Consider providing visual and auditory tests for some students. Adjust instructional methods, as deemed advisable.
- *Eliminate methods and attitudes considered appropriate for children, but which are completely unwarranted for adults.* ABE staff members must recognize and appreciate the difference between voluntary and compulsory educational experiences.

Steps to Hold Learners

Some ABE students feel cheated by society. The result may be an underlying bitterness. *Most educational authorities agree that a sincere desire to help the student to reach the next rung of the economic ladder is the most important part of ABE instruction.* This desire on the part of ABE staff members should be combined with a thorough understanding and appreciation of the goals and personal problems confronting the student. Students who are familiar with the ways of the world can quickly spot insincerity and may drop from the program.

A number of steps can be taken to create an inviting and enduring climate for learning:

- *Learn the reasons why each person enrolled in ABE.* Perhaps it was to get a job or a better job, help children in school, work toward a high school education, or take advantage of supportive services offered through ABE.
- *Gear instruction toward the student's personal objectives.* The student's reasons for enrolling should always be kept in mind.
- *Discuss individual goals and aspirations with each student.* Encourage the student to think through a step-by-step plan of achievement.
- *Select appropriate instructional methods.* Well selected instructional materials help create a climate for learning. Give more than lip service to the fact that learning must have meaning. Abstract ideas are often difficult for students to understand.
- *Use specific examples of familiar problems to teach concepts.* Everyday family problems, such as discovering how annual percentage rates differ among lending agencies, have practical application for teaching economic concepts.

► *Develop an ABE curriculum that encourages students to learn by doing.* Some programs correlate job preparatory instruction with ABE instruction. To illustrate, instruction in measurement can be directly related to measurement in a job-preparatory program—such as food services.

Implications

The major purpose of the ABE program is clearly defined—to instruct adults in reading, writing, arithmetic, and related areas. Accomplishing this purpose is difficult, unless long-standing barriers to classroom learning are broken.

It takes courage and initiative for adults to come back to school. Likewise, it takes courage, initiative, and understanding on the part of teachers and administrators to create a warm climate for learning and to develop a flexible, realistic program that will adequately serve adults. Unless a warm climate for adult learning is established, student recruitment and most other administrative priorities will be meaningless.

12. Providing Individualized Instruction

Every time an adult attends an ABE class or spends time in the learning laboratory, he should feel a sense of accomplishment. Each student should compete with himself rather than with other adults. Learning is a private matter and a personal challenge. Logically then, instruction should be individualized.

Programmed Instruction

The use of programmed instruction is an excellent means for individualizing learning. This method of instruction is especially valuable for ABE students because the underlying philosophy is closely related to fundamental principles of adult learning. *In brief, programmed instruction is a sequence of short learning progressions which logically lead the student step-by-step to specific, well-defined objectives.* All programmed materials do not follow the same format. Typically, a rule or principle is stated for each small step. The step may include examples or illustrations. The student is asked to indicate his understanding of the rule or principle by filling in a blank or selecting one of a series of multiple-choice answers. Or, he may be asked to solve a problem and record the answer.

After making a response, the learner is urged to refer immediately to the answer provided in the text. *That he learns the correctness or incorrectness of his response immediately is the heart of programmed instruction—the reinforcement theory of learning.* Many programs provide more information to correct any misunderstanding of the concept to be mastered. The student rechecks himself or, if necessary, asks the teacher or learning laboratory coordinator for assistance before going on to the next step. Thus, time and effort are not wasted by compounding errors. At each step, the student builds on what he has learned in preceding steps. The steps gradually increase in depth as the student moves on his own from what he knows to the unknown—from the simple to the complex. With each success the student gains confidence in his ability to learn. Too often in a traditional setting, the student discovers his lack of understanding of a basic principle after the teacher has administered a test or after the class has moved to more complex material.

Misconceptions About Programmed Instruction

There are many misconceptions about programmed learning, including these:

- *Programmed learning is a new method with insufficient research to establish its validity and reliability.* Some 200 research studies over the past 50 years, largely by psychologists, have confirmed the value of the reinforcement theory of learning. Furthermore, the method is not new in adult education.
- *Programmed instruction can be used only in a learning laboratory.* Such a facility has a trained coordinator, a good learning atmosphere, and storage space for materials and equipment. But programmed instruction can also be used in the regular classroom. Programmed materials can be developed or modified by the teacher for use with demonstration, problem solving, and group discussion methods.
- *Programmed materials are nothing more than workbooks or sets of tests.* The reinforcement theory of learning is designed to develop understanding, whereas testing measures understanding.
- *Students enrolled in home study or other unsupervised programs refer to answers before filling in blanks.* Adults, with counseling, quickly learn that programmed lessons are not tests by which they are graded. Out-of-school youth and adults who are sensitive to failure appreciate the opportunity to correct their own mistakes and move ahead at their own rate.
- *Programmed lessons are confusing.* Most adult students respond favorably to programmed learning, whether provided by multimedia or paper-and-pencil systems.

- *Programmed instruction is expensive.* The fact that students can study largely on their own reduces the cost. Programmed learning provides one of the best methods of increasing ABE instructional services for large numbers of people, without increasing per pupil hour costs. Traditional large group instruction, in addition to being educationally unsound, is sometimes quite expensive.
- *Programmed learning does not provide problem solving and group discussion opportunities.* Programmed instruction is not a panacea for adult education. It cannot replace the effective classroom teacher or learning laboratory coordinator. The teacher or coordinator and students must still discuss causes, relationships, and the application of facts. Programmed instruction does eliminate the tediousness of teaching routine facts.
- *Programmed materials are difficult to evaluate.* Like all instructional materials, programmed materials vary in quality. Improper selection, especially in relation to student reading levels, is a common mistake. Selected materials, including pictorial and written illustrations, should also be appropriate for adult learners.
- *No special teacher training is required other than a basic understanding of the reinforcement theory of learning.* The practice of assigning unprepared teachers, coordinators, and paraprofessionals to programmed instruction is unfair to students and staff members. In general, the techniques of preservice and inservice teacher training outlined in chapters 7 and 8 are applicable.

Unlimited Opportunities

Individualized instruction, as a change from traditional group instruction, opens unlimited opportunities for expansion of ABE outreach services in both urban and rural communities. Programmed learning materials are especially adaptable for use by paraprofessionals in home study situations and neighborhood centers. Students can enroll whenever they wish rather than waiting for a new term to begin. Thus, the director has a high degree of flexibility in organizing and developing an ABE program at the place and time that is most advantageous for individuals.

The director's role in expanding ABE opportunities through the programmed instruction is quite important. A lack of understanding or fear of an unknown instructional approach may deter even highly qualified teachers from trying programmed instruction. Local or area preservice and inservice training programs appear to be a practical method of familiarizing all staff members with the reinforcement theory of learning and its application through the use of programmed materials. The following non-directive techniques are also suggested:

- ► Have teachers and paraprofessionals observe in local learning laboratories where programmed instruction is being used.
- ► Encourage visits to learning laboratories in other communities.

- ► Have experienced teachers and students describe their experiences with programmed instruction.
- ► Provide documented reports of student progress in reading and other subjects.

Implications

If programmed instruction is included as a part of preservice and inservice training for teachers, coordinators, and paraprofessionals and if some of the common mistakes in the use of programmed materials are corrected, this approach to learning can improve the effectiveness of ABE. The close relationship between programmed learning and the fundamental principles of ABE instruction offers directors an almost unlimited opportunity to expand their programs, especially in partnership with other community agencies and business and industry.

Non-directive administrative techniques usually convince teachers that a method such as programmed instruction is worth investigating and trying out in their classrooms. Keep in mind that with many teachers, including ABE teachers trained to teach elementary children, specific teaching methods are rooted in strong personal convictions. *Individualized instruction, whether through programmed learning or other approaches, is the most important principle.*

School superintendents and other educational leaders are carefully observing ABE and high school credit learning laboratories that have been established within the past few years. ABE educators who possess knowledge and experience with programmed instruction can provide the leadership for change—change which places emphasis on individualized learning.

13. Providing Guidance and Counseling

Many ABE programs, especially in rural areas, do not have the services of a counselor as such. The program director or the teacher must then assume the counseling and guidance function—beginning with student recruitment and continuing through student follow-up. In other words, every successful ABE program has one or more counselors.

Pre-Entry Guidance

The counselor—that is, whoever is talking with the prospective student—should explain the purpose of ABE in terms the person can understand. Some adult learners enter the program with expectations that are beyond what the program can realistically offer. To reduce the number of dropouts, students need to understand what ABE can and cannot provide for them. For example, students should understand how much study will be required to advance to a higher reading level.

Securing a job, or advancing in the job currently held, is the foremost objective of many ABE students. To help students achieve this objective, some ABE programs provide a combination of ABE instruction and job training. *Review current job opportunities in the community in relation to the amount of ABE instruction and job training required.* In some instances students can attend an ABE class for half a day and a job preparation class for the other half. Combinations can often be developed through linkage with other educational programs and community partnerships with business and industry. Staff members should be thoroughly familiar with the job situation in the community.

Testing

Assessing the academic skill level of new students, by either formal or informal methods, is an essential part of ABE counseling and instruction. Achievement testing helps to determine the strengths and weaknesses of each student, establish the entry placement and level of

instructional materials assigned, and provide for measurement of individual learning progress.

When and how to administer achievement tests is controversial. Improperly administered tests can discourage students and aggravate the dropout problem. Most authorities agree on the following:

- *Use basically the same criteria to select ABE achievement tests as to select ABE instructional materials.* Is the test designed for adults? Is the vocabulary satisfactory? Are the directions clear and simple? Are suggestions and procedures provided for the teacher?
- *Administer a test only after the student understands that the purpose of testing is to aid in the learning process.* Most students want to be informed regularly as to their progress. Each should be assured that test results will be held in strict confidence. In teacher counseling terms, "Test results are private—something we need to discuss your progress. They will help you to see how much you are improving from day to day. They will help me to help you."
- *Create a relaxed testing atmosphere.* Encourage teachers to put students at ease, repeat instructions if necessary, and make everyone feel as comfortable as possible. Empathy for the student does not invalidate the testing process.
- *Limit initial testing to short adult-oriented achievement tests.* A battery of intelligence tests, personality inventories, interest inventories, and aptitude tests—as used in elementary and secondary programs—completely discourages most adult students.

- *Urge teachers to discuss both test scores and student progress on a private, individual basis.* No student wants his shortcomings disclosed to his friends and neighbors.
- *Include preparation, selection, and the proper use of tests as a part of preservice staff preparation.*

Related Counseling Services

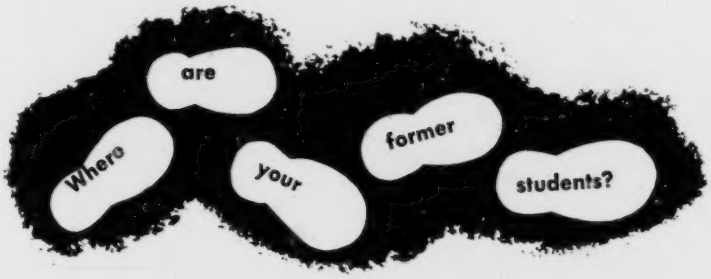
ABE students may have serious personal problems that affect their ability to learn. Most of these problems—such as health problems, need for legal advice, employee/employer working relationships, housing problems, family difficulties—are beyond the professional training and authority of ABE staff members. In such matters, ABE personnel should serve on a referral basis.

Provide teachers and counselors with a complete listing of major community services available to ABE students. If a student indicates a desire for assistance, refer the individual to the appropriate family service agency, legal aid service, or other professionally competent agencies. A listing, including agency addresses and a brief description of available services, can usually be provided by the local United Appeal organization or a similar local agency authorized to coordinate and publicize such services. Helping students to locate and use available community services increases the value of the ABE program.

Student Follow-Up

A follow-up of individuals who have completed the program, or who have dropped from the program, is often a weak point in the ABE counseling and guidance service. The time involved in conducting follow-up studies, the difficulty of making contact with former students, uncertainty as to what questions to ask, and the time involved in tabulating results discourages many directors from conducting follow-up studies of any type. Yet, follow-up studies are a valuable aid in curriculum development, as well as in program evaluation. Just as important, follow-up reports offer substantiating evidence for existence of the program. Follow-up can take ABE from the realm of "We think it is a good program," to "We know it is a good program!"

The sampling technique is one approach to follow-up. Limit the number of questions asked of former students to one or two different items each year. Make maximum use of teachers in follow-up studies, since they generally have a closer relationship with former students than do administrative staff members. The sampling technique does not place a heavy time burden on any one teacher.



Implications

A realistic approach to what the ABE program can and cannot provide the student may help in preventing expectations beyond the student's ability or the time he has available. A fair appraisal of the job opportunities open to the ABE student builds greater confidence in the program. Overstatement can have the opposite effect.

A carefully planned testing program is a vital part of the guidance and counseling service. Test results must be used in total confidence and with compassion for the learner.

The effective counselor, or teacher-counselor, listens to the student's personal problems. Often the student does not know how and where to obtain help. ABE counselors should be well informed about community agencies that can provide assistance.

An annual follow-up program, at least on a limited basis, is an important phase of the ABE guidance and counseling service.

14. Keeping Records and Preparing Budgets

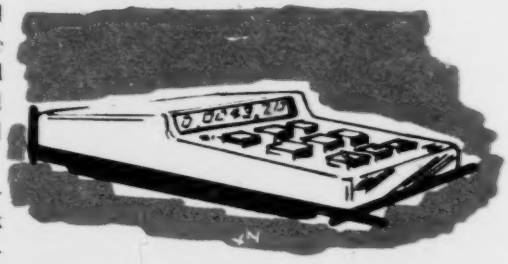
An ABE budget should be far more than a line-item list for using next year's funds. *Every director should use available funds for the things the program needs the most.* The budget is therefore an important administrative tool for analyzing staff needs and planning the best way to use available resources.

Effective budgeting for a new program year begins with the keeping of good records of expenditures for the current year. Without careful analysis of present and past expenditures, next year's budget can be little more than a calculated guess. Under "guess-and-hope" budgeting, it may be discovered too late that some items were overbudgeted while others were underestimated. Either situation causes problems and is an indication of poor planning.

Expenditure Records

The following suggestions for record keeping are based on the experiences of a number of ABE directors:

- Be completely informed about ABE regulations and guidelines.
- Establish written procedures and instructions for initiating purchase requisitions for instructional supplies, equipment, printing, expendable supplies, and travel.
- Minimize overlap in financial obligations between fiscal years. Establish a cutoff date for requisitioning supplies and equipment. Annually remind teachers of the cutoff date and explain why it is necessary.
- Include requisitioning procedures in a teacher's handbook or other written communication. Use examples to explain procedures.



► In addition to the official records of the clerk-treasurer, some directors like to keep their own informal records. Convenient references help to avoid underspending as well as overspending. Five columns for each expenditure category are suggested. At the top of the balance column enter the total amount approved for the category for the fiscal year. Add expenditures at regular intervals during the year and subtract from the running balance. Record the new balance.

Instructional Supplies	Requisition Date	Requisition Number	Requisition Amount	Allotment Balance
Allotment 7-1-7-				$1,500.00
Writing paper	8-7-7-	750 ABE	$42.50	
Pens	8-7-7-	751 ABE	24.30	1,433.20
Reading Kit XYZ	8-14-7-	759 ABE	89.90	
Reading Worksheets D	8-14-7-	760 ABE	21.35	1,321.95
Mathematics Set II	8-16-7-	764 ABE	57.88	

► Make judgments on the purchase of supplies, equipment, travel, and so forth in line with remaining balances.

► Regularly check balances in all categories, including salaries, with the clerk-treasurer.

► Analyze current year expenditures early. Trends in expenditure patterns should be noted in sufficient time to submit a budget revision and make effective use of available funds.

Inventory Records

► Keep an up-to-date inventory of all equipment.

Date of Purchase	Description	Make, Model, Serial Number	Cost	Location: Building and Room	Other: Transfer, Repairs, Sale, Etc.
7-4-6-	Slide Projector	Brand X 1747-1821-6	$185.50	Central Room 301	Stolen 12-28-7-
7-10-6-	Typewriter	Make Z 1257302	247.71	Director's Office	
7-25-6-	Adding Machine	Model S 1843721	Gift	East Center Room 18	Major repairs needed
8-4-6-	Language Machine	Brand B 473-56-2	250-	Central Room 301	
10-10-7-	"	"	"	East Center Room 18	Transferred from Central
1-20-7	Slide Projector	Brand X 4821-247-5	$225.50	Central Room 301	Replacement

► Record the transfer of equipment from one location to another. Note any special problems, such as high repair costs.

► Record the reason for disposal of each piece of equipment—obsolescence, sold, lost, stolen. Enter the date on the inventory record.

► Label or stencil all equipment in accordance with regulations.

Budget Preparation

- ► Analyze all categories of spending for the current year, including professional and clerical salaries. Can some expense items be reduced without damaging next year's program? Can these funds be more profitably used in another category?
- ► Translate educational plans for the coming year into dollar costs. What will a more effective inservice program or the opening of a new center cost? Which is more important, the purchase of additional equipment or an inservice program in the effective use of present equipment? Only the director, working closely with the staff, can answer such questions.
- ► Double check to make certain that cost estimates are complete. Have all fixed charges been included? If classes are conducted outside public school facilities, will any rental costs be involved?
- ► Incorporate the budget request in the current annual report to the superintendent.

- ► Substantiate each major request for additional dollars with specific fact as to why the money is needed. Is it part of a long range plan for ABE? Will it save dollars in the long run? Will the expenditure of more money result in a more effective instructional program? Why?
- ► Submit the budget to the State Department of Education on time and keep duplicate copies on file.
- ► Be prepared to implement the budget as soon as written approval is received.

Implications

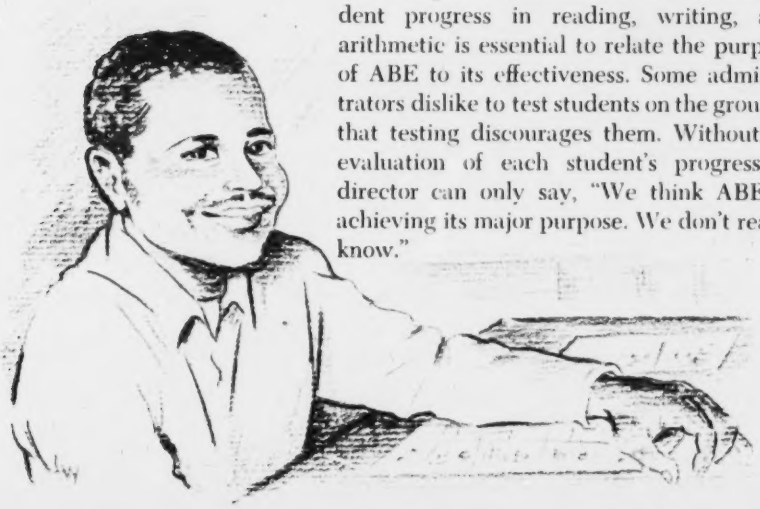
Considerable administrative time can be expended in handling requisitions, keeping adequate records, and using the budget as an administrative planning tool. On the other hand, more administrative time can be spent trying to locate lost equipment, unraveling snarls in the requisitioning process, and trying to explain and adjust mistakes in the approved budget. The satisfaction comes from using available funds wisely and well—with sufficient supporting evidence to prove that this is so.

15. Evaluating the Program

An annual evaluation of the local ABE program by teachers, students, administrative staff, and cosponsoring agencies has many advantages, including:

- An evaluation usually results in recommendations for program changes. Furthermore, implementing change is usually easier when those who are directly affected help make the recommendations.
- With annual evaluation, the purpose of the local ABE program is more clearly understood by everyone—including students.
- A self-evaluation of the program provides a valuable inservice activity for teachers.
- Evaluation helps to avoid false assumptions. A high dropout rate, for example, may be blamed on poor instruction. Evaluation may reveal that a poor policy of testing and student placement is to blame or that the time classes are offered are inconvenient for a number of students.
- Periodic reports to the superintendent and the board of education, including recommendations for program improvement, can be substantiated with facts.
- Budget recommendations, based on substantiated facts, are more convincing than recommendations based on opinions.
- Legal or financial restrictions, which critics feel impede the program, can be defended with facts.

A complete evaluation of individual student progress in reading, writing, and arithmetic is essential to relate the purpose of ABE to its effectiveness. Some administrators dislike to test students on the grounds that testing discourages them. Without an evaluation of each student's progress, a director can only say, "We think ABE is achieving its major purpose. We don't really know."



Suggestions for Self-Evaluation

The following suggestions should help an ABE director build a self-evaluation program:

- *Involve teachers in planning and conducting self-evaluation.* The most successful program evaluations are developed by the entire staff on a step-by-step basis.
- *Develop and use anonymous student opinionnaires.* The student opinionnaire is a practical, inexpensive method of collecting suggestions for program improvement and information about program benefits.
- *Plan an annual follow-up of students.* Follow-up can be a part of teacher inservice training. The teacher is usually in the best position to conduct a student follow-up study. Students are more likely to respond to a request from a person they know. As part of follow-up, contact ABE students currently enrolled in other school programs.
- *Develop a pretest/post-test plan.* Urge ABE teachers to keep individual records of each student's grade-level placement test scores. Also encourage teachers to repeat the entrance test at the end of the term to determine individual progress.
- *Decide what student data to collect.* Analyze the data within the limits of available staff time.
- *Make maximum use of existing records.* Student registration forms, monthly and annual attendance reports, student employment records, and counselor reports provide information that is seldom used to full advantage.
- *Have teachers conduct an annual self-appraisal.* A self-appraisal by each teacher gives the director an opportunity to discuss individual strengths and weaknesses. Helping teachers to improve their classroom techniques is one of the most important functions of the ABE director.
- *Set aside specific times for classroom visitations.* First-hand observation is essential. Put visitation times on your calendar and allow nothing to interfere.
- *Have each member of the administrative staff, including the director, make an annual self-appraisal.*
- *Prepare an annual evaluation report for the superintendent and board of education.* Include program successes, failures, and aspirations.
- *Before the close of the program year, prepare a list of improvements planned for the next year.* At specific times during the following year, report to the superintendent and the board of education on the progress made in accomplishing these goals. Substantiate progress reports with factual data.

► *At least once a year, make a thorough review of ABE activities conducted in partnership with community agencies.* Both partners should present facts and make suggestions for program improvement.

► *Complete program evaluation at a time when findings and recommendations for change will be useful in planning the program for the next fiscal year.* The best incentive for self-evaluation is stimulation of positive change.

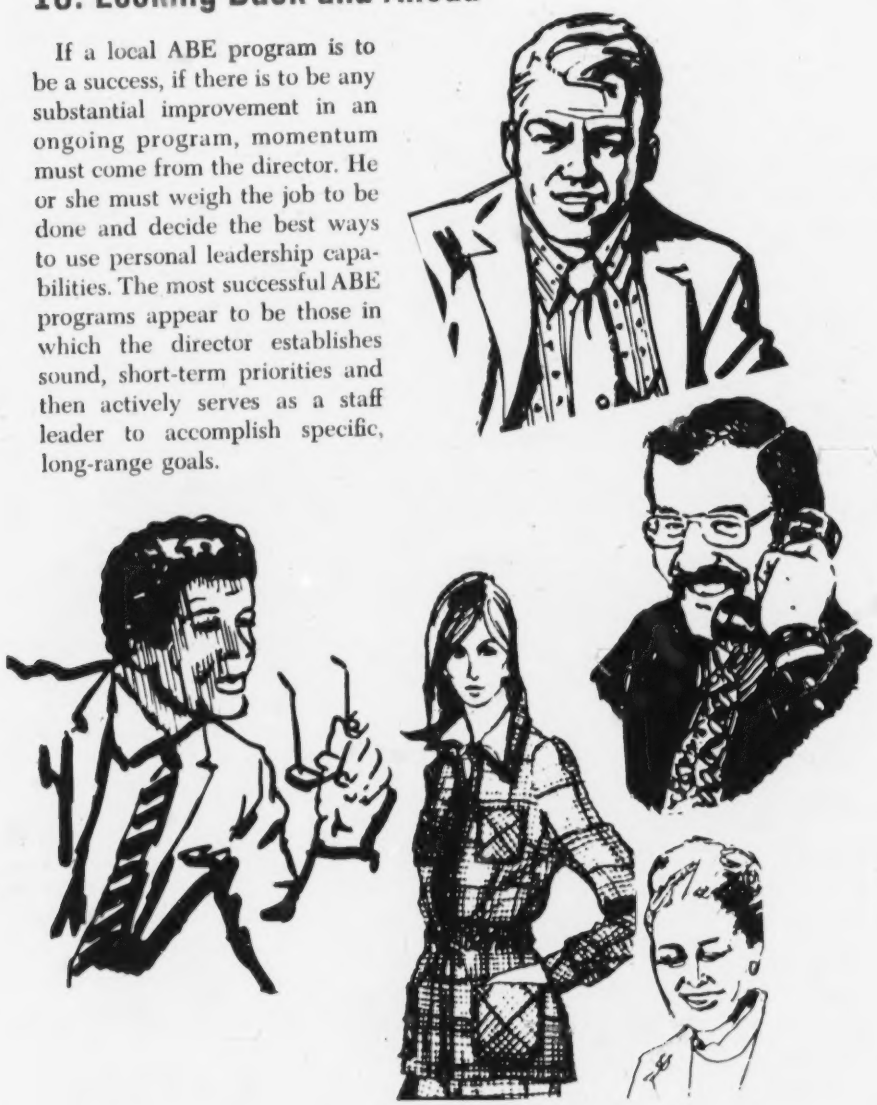
Implications

Evaluation is often the most neglected phase of school administration. There can be no effective evaluation unless the purpose of the program is clearly understood by everyone concerned. In the early days of ABE, there may have been some excuse for not fully understanding the purpose of the program or not knowing what was being accomplished. Excuses are no longer valid. Directors of every educational program, whether for adults or children, want more funds to serve students. Without effective evaluation at the local level, it will become increasingly difficult to substantiate requests for more ABE funds.

An ongoing plan for local evaluation calls for self-discipline and an objective point of view. But a local approach has many advantages over infrequent formal evaluations by an outside agency.

16. Looking Back and Ahead

If a local ABE program is to be a success, if there is to be any substantial improvement in an ongoing program, momentum must come from the director. He or she must weigh the job to be done and decide the best ways to use personal leadership capabilities. The most successful ABE programs appear to be those in which the director establishes sound, short-term priorities and then actively serves as a staff leader to accomplish specific, long-range goals.



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